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# THE SCOPE OF IOWA HISTORY

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## THE SCOPE OF IOWA HISTORY

To define the scope of the history of Iowa by the fundamental elements of time, place, and persons is to make an extension of or addition to that conception which is in common observation the narrower point of view. The history of Iowa can never be restricted by the artificial bounds of the State, but must ever be regarded as a resultant of external as well as internal forces. As the geology of Iowa has meaning only as the carboniferous and the glacial periods are studied and interpreted in their relations to other periods, so the history of Iowa is an integral part of the history of the Valley of the Mississippi and must be interpreted in these larger settings of time and space.

Where the pre-historic ends in Iowa can not be defined with precision. Anthropology, ethnology, and archaeology now and then tender a parcel of knowledge of the remote past. Copper implements, stone knives, a rude cloth, and carved pipes found in mounds pronounce the existence of an early culture. But the origin of this people, their number, their government, their customs, and their decline are questions which the absence of adequate and satisfactory records do not yet permit the historian to solve or to answer. Likewise the early life of the Indian tribes — their origin, their development, and their social life — has not yet fully emerged from the haze of conjecture, legend, and tradition into the light of reliable historical knowledge.

Solid historical ground is reached when Father Jacques Marquette and Louis Joliet land on Iowa soil on June 25, 1673. With bible and crucifix the black-gowned mission-

ary visits the Illinois Indians in Iowa; and the narrative of his journal glows with religious fervor and missionary zeal. The account of this first descent of the Father of Waters by the white man expresses itself in descriptions of the scenery, the flora, and the animal life on its banks. Marquette notes with care the fishes in its waters; the sight of wingless swans and buffaloes greets him; the climate, latitude, and the topography of the region find a place in his narrative; and with much detail he describes the organization, the customs, the appearance, and the hospitality of Indian tribes.

This voyage of Marquette marks the beginning of a period of exploration. Other explorers come to the Mississippi Valley. Julien Dubuque becomes the first settler upon Iowa soil, and the romances as well as the history of the Mississippi Valley are begun. The history of jurisdictions over Iowa, of settlements, of wilderness-winning, of government, law, institutions, wealth, population, and homes constitutes the thread around which the story of Iowa is woven.

Geographically Iowa is situated in the Mississippi Valley, and the history of the one will supplement that of the other. Both the elements and the setting are western. Iowa was a section as well as a reservoir for the waves of early migration which peopled the West. This inter-relation of forces and events and atmosphere and scenes becomes a part of the history of Iowa as well as a part of its destiny. Likewise the story of California must be built upon the foundation of its western location and immigration; nor can the history of Massachusetts be divorced from its New England location and its sombre atmosphere of Puritanism.

Politically, Iowa has been under several sovereign juris-

dictions, each of which has left historical traces upon the area. During the possession of the region by France for eighty-seven years Iowa was a wilderness and the history of this time is made principally by Canadian voyageurs and explorers. Thirty-four years' existence under the flag of Spain has left the history of several notable land grants; Spanish names have been left in Iowa; the white man's relations with the Indians in Iowa begin; and the fur trade and the lead industry are initiated by Julien Dubuque. Again the Iowa country comes for three years under the dominion of France; and its cession, as a part of Louisiana, to the United States in 1804 marks the beginning of a jurisdiction which survives to-day.

Under the American flag Iowa's jurisdictional lineage begins with the Upper Province of Louisiana. Over this area the laws and jurisdiction of the Indiana Territory were extended in 1804, and thus the aegis of the Northwest Ordinance was first extended over Iowa. The Territories of Louisiana and Missouri then exercised subordinate jurisdiction over Iowa until 1821, when for nearly thirteen years it remained a political orphan. Then for four years it was under the laws and authority of the Territories of Michigan and Wisconsin. The experience and history of these various subordinate jurisdictions later become crystallized in the Organic Act of the Territory of Iowa. The long descent of this political estate bears the marks of many transfers and offers a fertile field for the comparative study of Territorial jurisdictions.

Iowa history — as the history of Iowa or the subjective aspect of the subject — is concurrent in its beginning with the inception of Iowa as a body politic. Then the internal forces of history act and interact upon the external factors of time, location, and jurisdictions. The settlement of

Iowa in 1833 (the common date for the opening of Iowa) marks the beginning of social forces in Iowa — population, law, industry, custom, and the adaptation of experiences to new conditions. Every phase of history then has made its appearance — institutional, industrial, political, etc.

On the institutional side Iowa furnishes a rich field for the study of political governmental forms and experimentations through the agency of political parties. Political creeds and methods are transplanted from other States and are made to respond to the democratic and the pioneer elements. The response to the influences of the national party can be traced. The origin, growth, triumph, decline, and decay of political parties find illustration in Iowa. The operation of political party machinery can be observed from the humblest voter to the State convention, and from the ordinary broadside to the daily newspaper. Through the medium of political parties there are presented the tests and the defects of a code of fundamental law for the Commonwealth

The writing of the history of the church in Iowa likewise invites the historian. The transplanting, growth, and expression of religious creeds can be noticed, the number and the increase of various sects and their location, their colonizing tendencies, and the governmental organization of various sects can be studied. The circuit riders have a history of their own; while early places of worship, the erection of churches, and the socializing influence of the church furnish additional subjects for study. The mere mention of the Mormons, the Dunkards, the Latter Day Saints, the Inspirationists, and the Amish Mennonites indicates many possibilities for historical study.

Upon the very general subject of education the field for study in Iowa is vast. What was the professional equip-

ment of the earliest schoolmaster? What was his salary and his standing in the community? The zeal of the early pioneers for education should be told. The early courses of study, the financial support of schools, the powers and duties of the earliest school officials, the social power of the school in the neighborhood, the general administration and supervision of the schools invite further study. The history of the high school in Iowa alone would make a monograph.

Higher education in Iowa offers other routes of inquiry. The origin and development of the various colleges, their struggles, their financial endowments, their curricula, their students, and the past influence of the colleges in the educational world may be studied with profit. The administration and support of education by the State for higher education as well as for the common schools suggest other subjects for inquiry. Much history is also wrapped up in the administrative and legislative records of the State institutions.

What were the social customs, habits, and pleasures of the early pioneers? How far did these operate as educational, aesthetic, or moral agencies? The novelist, taking Iowa pioneer conditions for a back-ground, would be required to be cognizant of the amusements, the manners, the etiquette, the dress, and the nomenclature of pioneer social life and events. He must needs know their festal days and celebrations, their attitude toward the church, and even their excesses, their indulgences, and their vices. Who can estimate the influence of the early spelling-schools and the pioneer lyceum debating societies?

Itself the conservator of a vast amount of historical material, the Iowa newspaper as an institution well deserves an historian to chronicle its beginnings, its early editors,

and the struggles of its first days. The financial side can claim attention, its influence as an agency in party machinery has been enormous, and its influence upon morals, religion, education, and general intelligence can hardly be overestimated. Briefly suggested, there is much history between the pioneer four-page weekly issued from a Franklin press and the modern fifty-page Sunday edition.

Another social institution — that of marriage — arouses a multitude of questions. How were marriages regulated in Iowa before the inauguration of civil government? What marriage laws did Iowa inherit from its former jurisdictions? What were the laws on divorce and upon the wife's distributive share in property? The average age at which the pioneers married, the number of marriages, and the number and causes of divorcees would become interesting historical facts when juxtaposed to the statistics of more modern times.

A rich and abundant harvest will be yielded by excursions into the political and administrative history of Iowa. Here are recorded the beginnings of civil administration. Illustrations of popular sovereignty are found in the claim clubs; the creation of counties, townships, and municipalities follows. Where are the precursors of the various township and county officers? The history of the justice of the peace or of the county commissioners would shed many side-lights upon administrative history. Thousands of financial reports, vouchers, tax receipts, bonds, etc., in county vaults could be rejuvenated into county financial histories.

A welcome should also be extended to the village historian who sees more than prose and hears more than humdrum in the beginnings of towns and villages. How were the early town sites laid out and what assistance was ex-

tended by the legislature? The incorporation of the town, the inauguration of its government, its response to local conditions are subjects that will grow in interest and importance as they are studied. Not a few cities in Iowa were settled by groups from other counties. The influence of the early towns on morals, politics, religion, social life, and trade afford other branches for investigation. The man, who, with the prophetic vision of a Bradford, preserved the early town annals is worthy of both honor and praise.

A store of material upon the administrative history of Iowa is contained in the Public Archives of the State. The records of scores of boards, commissions, agents, and officers are preserved in reports, oaths of office, resignations, letters, petitions, and commissions. There may be found the history of the Fort Madison Penitentiary; in another place can be found the material of a contested election; maps show the labors of boundary commissioners; the records in the State Superintendent's office will show the growth of Iowa's educational system; and in another place will be found the reports of agents to negotiate loans or to select lands for the State.

In the legislative journals are to be found the parliamentary history of hundreds and thousands of bills and laws. Resolutions and minority committee reports throw light upon the attitude of the legislature in respect to the great national questions of slavery, homestead laws, financial policy, and the tariff. Election contests are abundant, while dramatic stories of Senatorial elections are sometimes found behind the meagre minutes in the journals. In the Congressional records, likewise, may be found scores of memorials, petitions, and bills from Iowa. Representatives in Congress present the attitude of their constituents

upon great issues. And much of the financial history of the Territory of Iowa is contained in the records and laws of Congress.

An adequate history of the Indians of Iowa has not yet appeared. Long chapters can be devoted to their inter-tribal wars. Their organizations merit further description. Their migrations, settlements, and industries, suggest other subjects. The Indian's relations with the Whites stimulate a host of inquiries. How did the government secure title to the Indian lands? What authority did the government exercise over them? How were treaties with the Indians consummated? How were the treaties kept? What were the operations of the early Indian traders in Iowa? At Washington the archives hold hundreds of reports from the Superintendents of Indian Affairs in the Iowa country. The various Indian outbreaks and wars alone would make a long story. The westering of the Indian tribes represents the force and volume of the western wave of pioneer migration.

Other racial groups in Iowa have histories. Much has already been written upon the history of the Scandinavian population in Iowa. Much unwritten history still reposes in the story of the Germans of Iowa. Other groups are the Jews, the Bohemians, and the Hungarians; while at Pella and in northwestern Iowa are large groups of descendants of the loyal followers of William of Orange. Of what political theories were these peoples the apostles? Why did they settle in Iowa? How have they responded to the pioneer agricultural environments? How have they intermingled with other races or how far have they retained their racial groups and characteristics? How far have they been assimilated in the political, industrial, religious, and institutional phases of American life?

Out of the military record also spring a large number of questions. Indian wars and outbreaks have already been suggested. Iowa's part in the Mexican War remains to be described. What was the attitude of Iowa toward secession? The raising, organizing, and equipment of Iowa troops in the Civil War represents a strenuous period of the State's history. The valor and bravery of Iowa soldiers upon the field will appeal to the historian as well as to the eulogist. The attitude of Iowa upon the great post-bellum questions can also claim a place in Iowa's record of achievements. History has already decided that Iowa had a great "War Governor".

The history of Iowa would of course be incomplete without a narration of the achievements of Iowa's men in national affairs. National as well as State history is interwoven about such names as Robert Lucas, Augustus Caesar Dodge, James W. Grimes, Samuel J. Kirkwood, John A. Kasson, Grenville M. Dodge, James Wilson, Justice Samuel F. Miller, and William B. Allison. They are types and representatives of great issues and achievements which have the background of a Mississippi Valley region.

An industrial history of Iowa, too, will some day be written. This would devote chapters to the early lead mines, the early means of travel and transportation, the construction of military and wagon roads, bridges, and ferries. The stage-driver, the ferryman, the mail contractor, and the river pilots have all done their share in the early history of the State. It might well be explained, too, that there is a connection between the location of the river cities and early navigation in Iowa.

A history of agriculture in Iowa would concern itself with the earliest improvements of fencing, buildings, orchards, and methods of tilling. The marketing and the consump-

tion of farm products would suggest other subjects. The use and development of machinery upon farms, the effects of railroads, social life upon the farms, educational and religious advantages, would furnish other avenues for study. Related subjects would be the origin and development of the industries of stock-raising, dairying, milling, and mining.

The subject of railroads is large in its capacity for historical treatment: the early land grants, the competition of various sections for trans-State lines, the legislative history of early railroads in Congress concern the beginnings of the railways in Iowa. State laws and taxation offer additional subjects. The influence of the railroads upon politics has been great and is intimately connected with the regulation of railroads by the State. Finally the transcendent influence of the railways in the development of the mining, agricultural, and industrial resources can not be overlooked by the historian.

Banks and banking, child labor, insurance, manufacturing, and the various trades and professions may serve as historical subjects. The mention of express, telegraph, and telephone companies indicates further possibilities in treating the industrial history of Iowa.

But the field is great and the subjects are infinite in number. Although Iowa history is essentially local in character, let no one disparage its interest and value. The geologist examines the minutest particles of rock and may find a measure of beautiful granite or discover a rich vein of ore. Close examination of rough material may reveal a wonderful and instructive story of the life of the past. Microscopic examinations by the biologist will give classifications of the orders of life. So the study of local history through the perspective of National history will furnish

the finer fibers, the delicate colorings, and the durable material which are woven into a great National pattern. Local history must study minutely. It must study the people's accomplishments and defeats, their mistakes and their triumphs, their joys and sorrows and their ideals — for this is humanity, and local history is the record of humanity.

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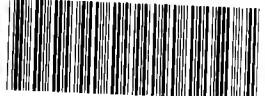








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